

THE ACT OF FAITH.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."—Acts 16: 31.

I once saw a lad on the roof of a very high building, where several men were at work. He was gazing about, with apparent unconcern, when suddenly his foot slipped, and he fell. In falling he caught by a rope, and hung suspended in mid-air, where he could neither get up nor down, and where it was evident he could sustain himself but a short time. He perfectly knew his situation, and expected that in a few moments, he must drop upon the rocks below, and be dashed to pieces.

At this fearful moment, a kind and powerful man rushed out of the house, and standing beneath him with extended arms, called out, "Let go the rope, and I will receive you. I can do it. Let go the rope, and I promise you shall escape unharmed."

The boy hesitated a moment, and then quit his hold, and dropped easily and safely into the arms of his deliverer. Here, thought I, is an illustration of faith. Here is a simple *act of faith*. The boy was sensible of his danger. He saw his deliverer, and heard his voice. He believed in him, trusted to him, and letting go every other dependence and hope, dropped into his arms.

So must a sinner distinctly apprehend *his guilt* and *his awful exposure* by nature. He must know where he is, and what he *needs*, before he will apply to Christ for help. He must see distinctly, that he *is* a sinner—a transgressor of God's law, and a rebel against his throne. He must see that he has incurred the sentence of the law; that it is a *just* sentence, and that he is liable every moment to sink and perish under it. He must see that, so far as his own efforts are concerned, there is no possibility of escape. He can make no amends, no expiation, for his past sins. The long catalogue of his transgressions stands arrayed against him; and for aught he can do, there it must stand. The sentence of the law has been passed upon him, and for aught he can do, it must be speedily executed; and if it is executed, it will sink him for ever; for this sentence is no other than eternal death: "eternal destruction from

the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." 2 Thess. 1: 9. In this awfully exposed, and so far as he is concerned, helpless and hopeless condition, he must see himself, before he will consent to drop into the arms of the Saviour, and accept deliverance on the conditions of the gospel.

And he must see more than this. He must see *who the Saviour is*, and *what he has done*, and what is his ability and readiness to save. Suppose the boy, suspended by the rope, had seen another little boy like himself come out of the house and stretch his weak arms, and call upon him to trust to him for deliverance. He would have cried out at once, "You cannot save me. Get out of the way, or I shall fall and crush myself and you." Just so the convicted sinner sees, when invited to put his trust in a man like himself. "A mere human deliverer!" he exclaims—"do you mean to mock me? What can such a deliverer do for a wretch like me? What can he do with those mountains of guilt which are pressing upon me, and with that deathless worm which is gnawing within me? What can he do with the dreadful sentence of the law which hangs over me, and the devouring flames which are kindled to consume me?" The sinner feels now that he needs a divine Saviour, an almighty Saviour—one who is able to "save to the uttermost"—one whose "blood cleanseth from all sin." He feels that no other Saviour can meet the fearful exigencies of his case, or can ever do him any good. And when he looks into the Bible, and finds that just such a Saviour is provided and freely offered; when he finds that a holy Saviour, whose word is truth—a glorious Saviour, altogether deserving his confidence and love; when, with the eye of faith, he sees the Saviour standing beneath him, extending his mighty arms to receive him, and calling out to him to let go all his false dependences and hopes, and drop at once into his faithful hands: what should prevent him from doing it—from simply putting forth *the act of faith*, and falling into the kind and gracious arms of his Deliverer? He obviously has all the knowledge and conviction that are necessary, and he has only now to believe in Christ, to trust to him, to fall into his embrace, and live

for ever. But suppose a man, while hanging, as it were, over the jaws of death, begins to *doubt the ability or the readiness* of Christ to save. Suppose he begins to reason with himself, "My soul is of great value, and the difficulties in the way of my salvation are great. How do I know that this Jesus can save me—that he can cleanse such a polluted heart, and rescue such a vile and guilty sinner? Or if he can, how do I know that he will? He may not be sincere in his offers. It may be he only intends to trifle with my misery." Would not this be a high affront and indignity offered to the benevolent Saviour? Would it not provoke him soon to withdraw his gracious hand, and say, "Well, sinner, if you are determined not to be saved, then you must perish. If you will not *trust in me*, then you must be cast off forever."

Or suppose that, while the Saviour is crying, "Look unto me, and be ye saved," you should say, "*I am not worthy* to come to Christ as I now am. I must wait till I have done something to recommend me to his regards." And suppose the Saviour should continue crying, "Come just as you are; come in all your vileness, and be cleansed in the fountain of my blood;" and you still hold back, and persist in the struggle, and hang upon the vain excuse; might he not be expected soon to withdraw, and leave an unbelieving rebel to perish?

Or suppose you should say, "*How came I* to be a sinner? Why did God permit me to sin, or permit sin to come into the world?" Or, "how can I believe of myself? Is not faith the gift of God? and until the gift is bestowed, what can I do but patiently to wait for it?" Or suppose you fly to the other extreme, and say, "I can believe and secure my salvation whenever I please; I need be in no haste about it. I will put off the work till a more convenient season." Or suppose you alledge that you are not yet enough convicted; have not had enough feeling, enough distress, to render it possible for you to come to Christ. Suppose you speculate and trifle, and think to throw off present obligation in either of these ways; what must be the feelings of the Saviour in regard to you? Here the poor rebel hangs over the pit of destruction, ready to drop at once into the burning lake; and here the

Saviour stands in all his fulness, offering to rescue him, and pleading with him to submit, and live. What more likely method could he take to seal and secure his own destruction?

Suppose the boy suspended by the rope, instead of dropping into the arms extended to receive him, had insisted on first knowing how he came to fall—"How came my foot to slip, and I to make this fearful plunge? Why did not the men on the roof take better care of me? Or suppose he had said, "I have no power to let go the rope. My hands are fast clenched upon it, and how can I open them of myself?" Or, "I can let go and be delivered at any time, and I choose to hang a little longer. Perhaps I have not yet had enough distress." Would he not be evidently beside himself? And yet such is the conduct of the great mass of sinners, and of serious, awakened sinners under the gospel.

Reader, what is your state? Are you yet in your sins? Do you see your dreadful guilt and exposure? And do you anxiously seek and inquire for deliverance? If not, it will be in vain to direct you. You will not follow any directions, if given. But if you see yourself to be all guilty and exposed; if your feelings prompt you to inquire, with the trembling jailer, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" then it is easy and pleasant to direct you, to point you to the compassionate Saviour. There he stands, with outstretched arms, waiting to intercept your fall. Hear him calling. Hear him inviting. "Come, come, for all things are now ready." Sinner, yield to him. Yield at once. Do not doubt his ability to save you. Do not doubt the sincerity of his offers. Do not wait to make yourself better. Do not hesitate or speculate a moment. Remember, that the question before you is one of *right* and *wrong*; and it is also one of *salvation* or *destruction*. You cannot delay without adding to your sin, and hazarding the interests of your immortal soul. *Now, then is your time.* Now, while you are reading and pondering these lines—now, while the pressure of obligation is strong upon you, let go, at once, every other dependence, and fall into the arms of your all-powerful Deliverer.